1319

COMIC SHOP NEWS™

PHANTOM STRANGER

Stranger Things Have Happened!

For a character who's been around for sixty years, the Phantom Stranger remains one of DC's most enigmatic characters. Readers will learn a little more about him over the next few months, however, thanks to *Dan DiDio & Brent Anderson's* new ***Phantom Stranger*** series, which explores the history of the character, his biblical origins, and his vital role in DC's upcoming ***Trinity War*** series.

Last spring, DC's Free Comic Book Day offering made it clear that the Phantom Stranger is one of the mysterious Trinity of Sin: Pandora, the Question, and the Phantom Stranger. Pandora is clearly the well-known figure from Greek mythology; the question's identity is as unknown to him as it is to readers; and the Phantom Stranger's origins, involving betrayal and pieces of Silver, links him to none other than Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Christ.

What inspired the decision to cast the Phantom Stranger in such a crucial role in the New 52 DCU? "I've always had a great interest in the Phantom Stranger," DC Entertainment co-publisher and ***Phantom Stranger*** writer *Dan DiDio* said, "and I've been a long-time fan of the character. So while I was developing the direction for the series, I worked with Geoff in linking his origin to the story he had planned for Free Comic Book Day with Pandora."

That FCBD offering featured the first appearance of the New 52 Phantom Stranger and the origins of the Trinity of Sin; will we see more of them in the early issues of ***The Phantom Stranger?*** "The zero issue has scenes that bookend his appearance in the Free Comic Book Day comic," DiDio said, "and Pandora will play a recurring role in his series."

What isn't clear at this time is the extent of the New 52 Phantom Stranger's powers. "We really don't know the full scope of the Stranger's powers—nor does he," DiDio said. "Things happen with him the way they need to happen. Further down the line, he will start to rebel against his destiny. At that point, he will learn his limitations."

Is the Stranger indeed Judas Iscariot, as the origin sequence implied? Are the Silver coins that comprise his necklace actually the thirty pieces of silver that Judas was given for betraying Christ? Will readers see more about that in the series, or will DiDio remain intentionally vague about his possible identity as the betrayer of Christ? "Everything about his origin is intentional," DiDio said enigmatically. "*Vague* is a matter of opinion..."

How did the Judas link come about? Does that make the Phantom Stranger a figure linked forever to betrayal, manipulation, and alienation, or will he seek to atone for his earlier failings in the course of the series? "Whatever link there is, it will be throughout the course of the series, and it gives purpose to his actions," DiDio said, unwilling to give away any further specifics this early in the game.

The first issue adds more Judas elements to the Phantom Stranger's story, including further references to the betrayal of Christ, suicide by hanging, a necklace made from thirty silver coins, and even miraculously empowered clothing made from the robe of the man the Stranger betrayed. Will we continue to get more glimpses of his past as the series progresses, filling in his early history more completely? "Yes, we'll get some glimpses, since a major focus of the story is how difficult it is to escape one's past," DiDio said.

The aforementioned necklace, with its thirty silver discs, also seems to have a hidden purpose. When the Phantom Stranger unknowingly betrays another important figure in the story, he loses one of those coins. Does this mean that after he completes twenty-nine similar missions, he will be freed from his curse? "Even the Phantom Stranger isn't completely sure what he needs to do to free himself from this curse," DiDio said. "But it *does* appear he's being led down a path."

Is it safe to say that events in ***Phantom Stranger*** are going to be pivotal to the lead-in to ***Trinity War***? "In 2013, there's *nothing* safe in the New 52," DiDio replied.

When and where do the events of ***Phantom Stranger #0*** occur, and how do the pave the way for the ongoing ***Phantom Stranger*** series? "The zero issue takes place now, in ancient times ,and outside of time," DiDio said. "And you'll have a good sense of his destiny by the end of the zero issue."

Landing an artist of *Brent Anderson's* caliber for the series is a real plus; what convinced DiDio that Anderson was the right man for the job? "So much of the series is The Stranger dealing with the emotions of the people around him," DiDio said, "and Brent's great strength is in the characters he draws and their expressions. And with issue one, *Philip Tan* will be joining Brent on the art to give it the dark, shadowy look you would expect from this series."

Phantom Stranger #0, a $2.99 comic by *Dan DiDio, Brent Anderson, & Scott Hanna,* is in stores now. ***Phantom Stranger #1*** is slated for October 3rd release.

by Cliff Biggers

Courtesy your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!

COMIC SHOP NEWSARAMA

Produced by *Comic Shop News* in cooperation with *newsarama.com*

Eternal Warrior Returns—It's About Time!

Maybe a guy who can live forever just doesn't feel the need to rush... that's the best explanation we can come up with for the Eternal Warrior waiting seven months to join the rebooted Valiant Universe!

At the Baltimore Comic-Con, Valiant executive editor *Warren Simons* announced that the Eternal Warrior would make his return in ***Archer & Armstrong #5***, courtesy of writer *Fred Van Lente* and artist *Emanuela Lupacchino*.

Simons told **comicbookresources.com** that this story arc is "really the introduction of one of Valiant's biggest characters. He's a key part of the mythology of our universe. He's key to what we're doing with the three immortal brothers, so we feel like it's a key part of what we want to go for."

In case the whole "three immortal brothers" comment means nothing to you, here's an explanation: the Eternal Warrior was originally one of the aforementioned immortal brotherly trio, which also included Armstrong from ***Archer & Armstrong*** and Ivar the Timewalker. Now that Armstrong is already a part of the New Valiant Universe and the Eternal Warrior is preparing for his return, it's only a matter of time before that final brother makes his presence known (after all, Simons *did* talk about "what we're doing with the *three* immortal brothers," didn't he?).

Archer & Armstrong #5 is slated for December release.

No Shun the Ocean

It's been described as a floating continent of trash potentially larger in size than the United States. In reality, it's a mass of tiny plastic particles, chemical sludge, organic effluviant, and other litter that is captures in the North Pacific Gyre, a swirling current that traps the garbage in its currents. It's no an island of garbage, because most of it consists of tiny particulates of trash floating just below the surface of the ocean; it doesn't even show up on photos from space. But it's there, weighing in at an estimated 100 million tons—and an heir to one of the world's great fortunes wants to make it go away in ***Great Pacific***, a new series by *Joe Harris & Martin Morazzo*.

The book's focal character is Chas Worthington, a twenty-three-year-old heir to a massive oil fortune, who decides to leave his life of privilege and wealth in order to make a difference. "Chas has a noble heart, but human frailties," Harris said. "He wants to solve this massive environmental problem but he's going to do it his way and by his rules. He doesn't just mean to clean up the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. He means to *conquer* it."

If Worthington is the hero of ***Great Pacific***, then the series' villain would have to be the Great Pacific Garbage Patch itself—and illustrating a floating mass of trash can be a real challenge to *any* artist. *Martin Morazzo* is up to the challenge of illustrating what Harris describes as "the elements and hostile tribes indigenous to the surrounding area, marine life that's been mutated by the pollution, pirates and even the United States' Navy."

As Morazzo sees it, "The Patch itself becomes a character throughout the story, along with the strange new inhabitants that come to live both atop it, and under its surface. I love just letting myself go while drawing the trash continent. It's a lot of work—but in some ways it is relaxing too!"

Harris stresses that ***Great Pacific*** isn't a Cassandra-esque polemic of environmentalism. "This isn't just some preachy call for conservation and recycling. With ***Great Pacific***, I'm out to tell a pulse-pounding story of survival and adventure."

Great Pacific #1 is slated for early November release from Image Comics.

Dynamite's Shadow is Victor-ious

For the first six issues, writer *Garth Ennis* has helmed the pulp hero's return in the ongoing ***Shadow*** comic book series. But it's writer *Victor Gischler* who'll be showing readers what evil lurks in the hearts of men beginning

in ***The Shadow #7***. "Having been the lead writer on the ***X-Men*** for the last two and a-half years, Victor's a great addition to our team," Dynamite publisher *Nick Barrucci* said. "Victor is a writer who we've wanted to work with for quite a bit, but weren't able to due to his exclusivity to Marvel. We've talked in the past, and are happy that we are able to work with him today. We actually spoke with Garth before deciding who the next writer on ***The Shadow*** should be, and Garth was happy to hear that it was Victor, as he's a fan of his novels and ***Punisher*** run. We're very fortunate at Dynamite to be working with Victor."

Gischler's first story arc begins as the Shadow's mystic power seems to be waning, leaving him unable to cloud men's minds and read their hearts. After the Shadow fails to stop a routine mugging, he travels to the Far East with his pilot and sidekick, WWI ace Miles Crofton. In Nepal, he hopes to reconnect with his old masters and to consult with them about what could be amiss with his powers. Instead, he finds opium smugglers. As always, The Shadow faces danger ... but he must also look within himself.

"The Shadow is a classic, iconic character that I'm thrilled to write," Gischler said. "It's really like you get two characters in one—The Shadow, an incredible crime fighter with the ability to cloud men's minds, and also as a wealthy man about town named Lamont Cranston who is almost a James Bond sort of character himself. Action, romance, and intrigue in an amazing pulp package make ***The Shadow*** a must read."

The Shadow #7 is slated for late October release.

Brisson & Walsh: The Comeback Kings

"In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes," *Benjamin Franklin* wrote. It turns out that, in spite of his inventive mind and his intellectual enthusiasm, even Franklin never envisioned a world in which death might be less than certain... for those with enough money.

Ed Brisson & Michael Walsh's ***Comeback***, a five-issue limited series coming from Shadowline and Image Comics, presents readers with a world in which death *is* avoidable... sort of. For the right price, a mysterious organization called Reconnect will send agents back in time to rescue people just prior to their untimely deaths, reversing tragedy and reuniting lost loved ones with their families.

"I wanted to treat mortality as a commodity," writer *Ed Brisson* explained. "Everyone is still mortal. Everyone dies. But, for the rich, life becomes something that can be extended for the right amount of money. While there are limitations on who can be saved from a premature death, it's still only the wealthy who are able to afford the luxury of bringing back their gone-to-soon loved ones."

Mark, one of Reconnect's agents, comes to learn that in spite of the seeming good of what he's doing, there is actually a dark side to saving the dead.

"Mark does this job because it's fairly easy and pays well. Although it's illegal, he justifies it to himself because he's helping people," Brisson said. "He's pushed to do some things that go counter to his own beliefs and is stuck with the moral dilemma of breaking his own code of ethics or dying."

Mark's partner Seth soon sees a way to manipulate Reconnect's time-travel capabilities for financial gain. As Seth's activities risk exposing Reconnect, Mark and other agents find themselves in danger of being exposed along with it.

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SPIDER-MAN

BY STAN LEE & LARRY LIEBER

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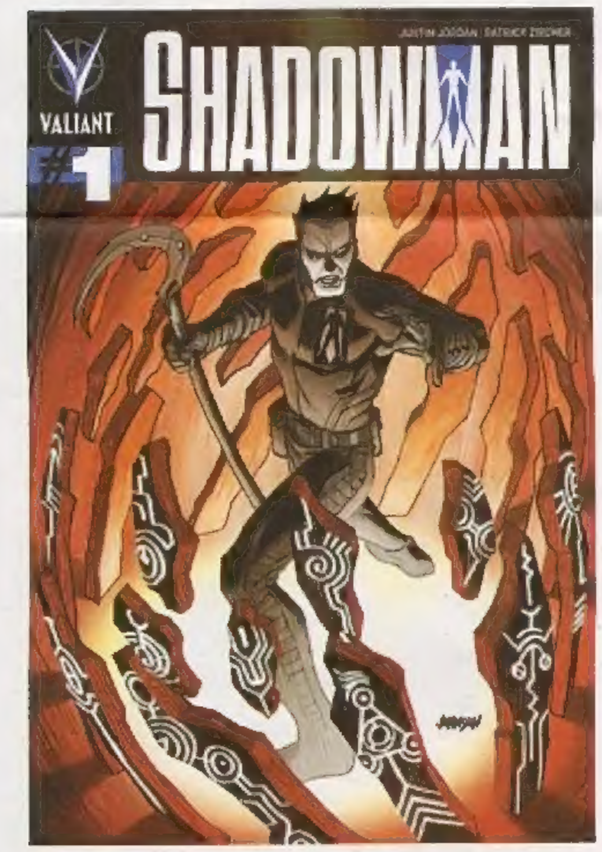
Comeback #1 is slated for late November release from Image Comics.

CSNsider

•Valiant has announced a trio of variants for ***Shadowman #1.*** In addition to the *Patrick Zircher's* standard cover, there will also be a "blackout" pullbox variant cover by Zircher; a 1-for-20 variant cover by *Dave Johnson;* and a 1-for-50 variant cover by *Bill Sienkiewicz.*



•The best-seller success of ***Batman: Earth One*** will very likely need to the development of additional ***Earth One*** original graphic novels in addition to the Superman and Batman volumes already published and/or in the works, *newsarama.com* reports. No word yet on which characters might star in future ***Earth One*** projects, however.

•*Dave Sim* has announced that he is ending his quirky ***Glamourpuss*** series (which combined fashion satire and insightful commentary on *Alex Raymond,* photorealism, and comic strip art) with ***Glamourpuss #26,*** currently in comic shops. Dwindling sales led to the unfortunate decision.

•Writer *Seth Peck* and artist *Paul Azaceta* will replace *Brian Wood & David Lopez* on ***X-Men #38.***

•Marvel's triptych cover reveal for Marvel NOW's ***Avengers #1*** reveals the initial lineup of the book, which will not only include all of the core players from the *Joss Whedon* film (Iron Man, Captain America, Thor, the Hulk, Black Widow, and Hawkeye), but also adds high-profile heroes like Spider-Man and Wolverine as well as less prominent heroes such as Captain Marvel, Sunspot, Spider-Woman, the Falcon, and Cannonball. And that's not the entirety of the Avengers lineup; writer *Jonathan Hickman* tweeted that the image "is not the complete roster; we intentionally left off new characters for spoiler reasons," adding that eight more characters would be a part of the team.

The Chase Is On

Joe Schreiber is well known to many ***Star Wars*** fans as the author who brought zombies to the ***Star Wars*** universe in the pages of ***Death Troopers*** and ***Red Harvest.*** But Schreiber's literary career extends beyond the ***Star Wars*** universe, as the upcoming series ***Chasing the Dead*** aptly demonstrates.

Written by *Matthew Scott & Tim Westland* and illustrated by *Dietrich Smith,* ***Chasing the Dead*** adapts Schreiber's suspense thriller. "I was immediately struck by Schreiber's ability to create amazing suspenseful situations that contained subtle elements of horror lurking in the corners. This is a zombie road trip done in a whole new way with a unique supernatural mythology and a fun twist at the end," *Matthew Scott* said. "As soon as I finished the book, I knew we had to bring this to graphic novel."

The first issue of ***Chasing the Dead*** introduces readers to Sue, a mother on a desperate search for her kidnaped daughter Lily. The kidnaper isn't after ransom, however—he only wants Sue to suffer... and if he doesn't get what he wants, then Lily will die. With detailed instructions, the faceless abductor leads Sue into a blinding snowstorm on the longest night of the year to a place she has not traveled to since childhood. The voice on the other end of her cell phone somehow knows Sue's deepest, most chilling secret – an ominous incident from her past, buried long ago...

Chasing the Dead #1 is slated for mid-November release from IDW.

Oh, Little Town of Bedlam...

When a town has been terrorized for years by a maniacal killer turned crime boss, how does the city recover when the criminal rejects his past and claims to have been rehabilitated? That's the question that *Nick Spencer & Riley Rossmo* explore in ***Bedlam,*** a new series debuting this fall from Image Comics.

The killer was known as Madder Red—but now that he's gone straight, he's taken his given name of Filmore Press once again. For him, the brutal elements of his history are gone and forgotten... but the city of Bedlam is still struggling to come to terms with his past mayhem.

"It's a scary world these characters live in. A desperate one. It's brutal what we put them through," Spencer said. "The shocks aren't confined to the last page, they're peppered throughout. There are a lot of 'shift in your seat uncomfortably' moments. You don't get *Riley Rossmo* to draw your book and not heap on the horror and violence."

Rossmo is working in muted tones for ***Bedlam,*** accenting the art with bold reds that seem to jump off the page. "***Bedlam's*** art is pulling a bit stylistically from my last three books," said Rossmo. "I'm trying for a cleaner line, lots of spotted blacks, and strong well-designed color palettes. The film ***M*** and *David Mazzucchelli* are big visual influences. I'm super-happy with the pages I've finished so far."

"There's a long-form, big commitment story here, that we will hopefully tell for years to come," Spencer said of the series. "It's like ***Morning Glories*** in that sense. The book's not going to be around a little while then vanish. The goal here is to build a mythology around a modern American metropolis, with Madder Red as our guide. It's exhilarating, starting down the path of something like this."

Bedlam #1, a 48-page introductory issue by Spencer & Rossmo with cover art by *Frazer Irving,* is slated for Halloween release.

Back to Press

•***Amazing Spider-Man #692 2nd Printing*** (JUL128161), featuring a variant cover by *Humberto Ramos,* in stores 10/3.

•***Green Lantern Annual #1 2nd Printing*** (JUL128223), featuring a recolored version of the original cover, in stores 10/3.

twitter.com/csnsider

WHILE, ON STAGE—
SPIDER-MAN IS FACE TO FACE WITH CLOWN-9 ON THE HIGH WIRE!
WHAT??
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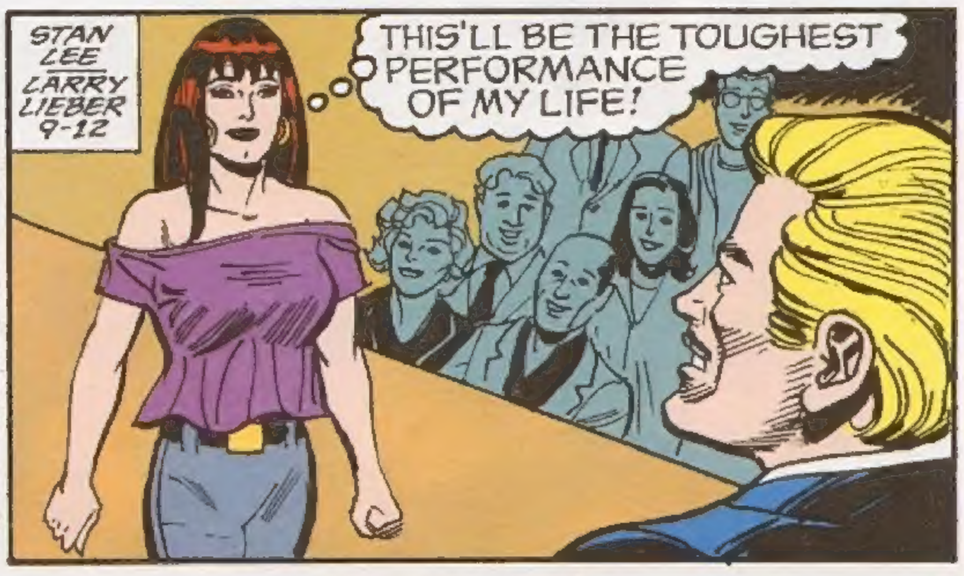
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THIS'LL BE THE TOUGHEST PERFORMANCE OF MY LIFE!
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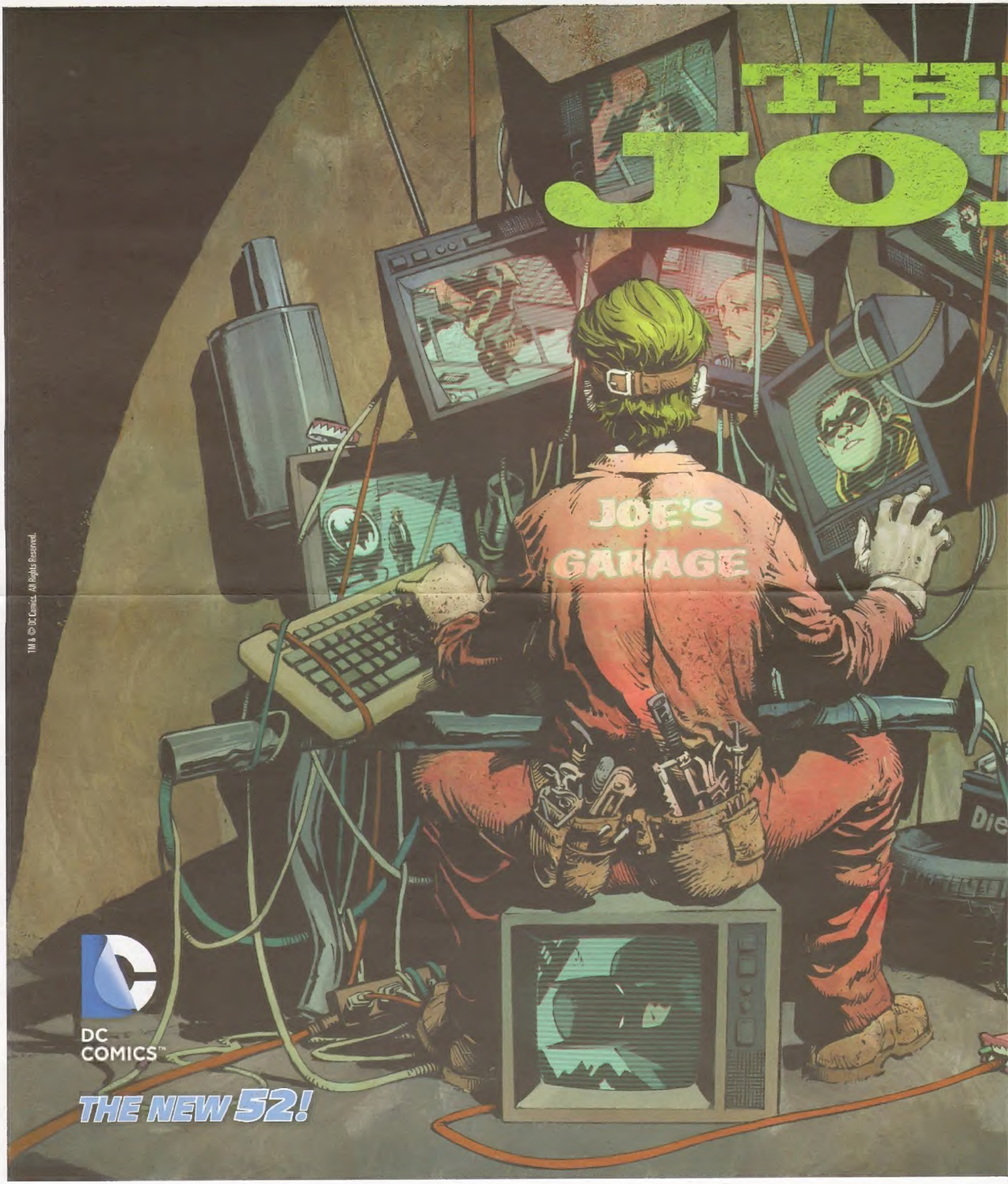
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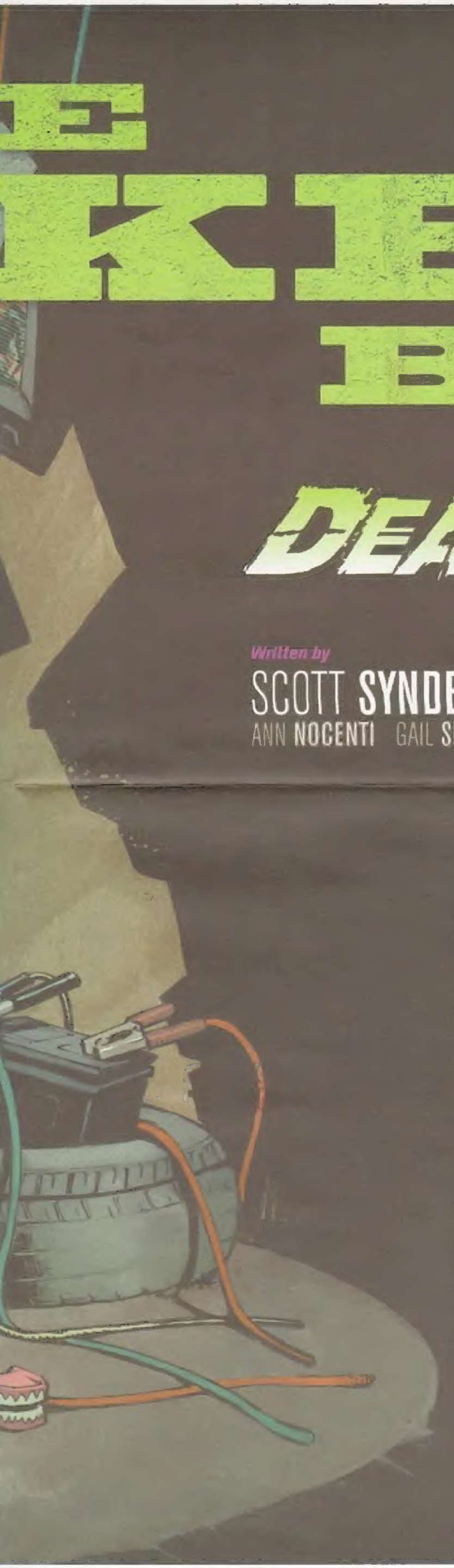
THE NEW 52!



HE KIER'S™ BACK!

DEATH OF THE FAMILY

An Epic Event

Written by

SCOTT **SYNDER** ADAM **GLASS** KYLE **HIGGINS** JOHN **LAYMAN** SCOTT **LOBDELL**
ANN **NOCENTI** GAIL **SIMONE** PETER J. **TOMASI** JAMES **TYNION IV**

Illustrated by

GREG **CAPULLO** EDDY **BARROWS** ED **BENES**
BRETT **BOOTH** ANDY **CLARKE** FERNANDO **DAGNINO**
JASON **FABOK** PATRICK **GLEASON** JOCK TIMOTHY **GREEN**
RAFA **SANDOVAL**

OCTOBER 2012

BATMAN #13
BATGIRL #13 – Prelude to Death of the Family
CATWOMAN #13 – Prelude to Death of the Family

NOVEMBER 2012

BATMAN #14
BATGIRL #14
CATWOMAN #14
SUICIDE SQUAD #14

DECEMBER 2012

BATMAN #15
BATMAN & ROBIN #15
DETECTIVE COMICS #15
BATGIRL #15
NIGHTWING #15
RED HOOD AND THE OUTLAWS #15
SUICIDE SQUAD #15
TEEN TITANS #15

JANUARY 2013

BATMAN #16
BATMAN & ROBIN #16
DETECTIVE COMICS #16
BATGIRL #16
NIGHTWING #16
RED HOOD AND THE OUTLAWS #16
TEEN TITANS #16

FEBRUARY 2013

BATMAN #17

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CSNsight

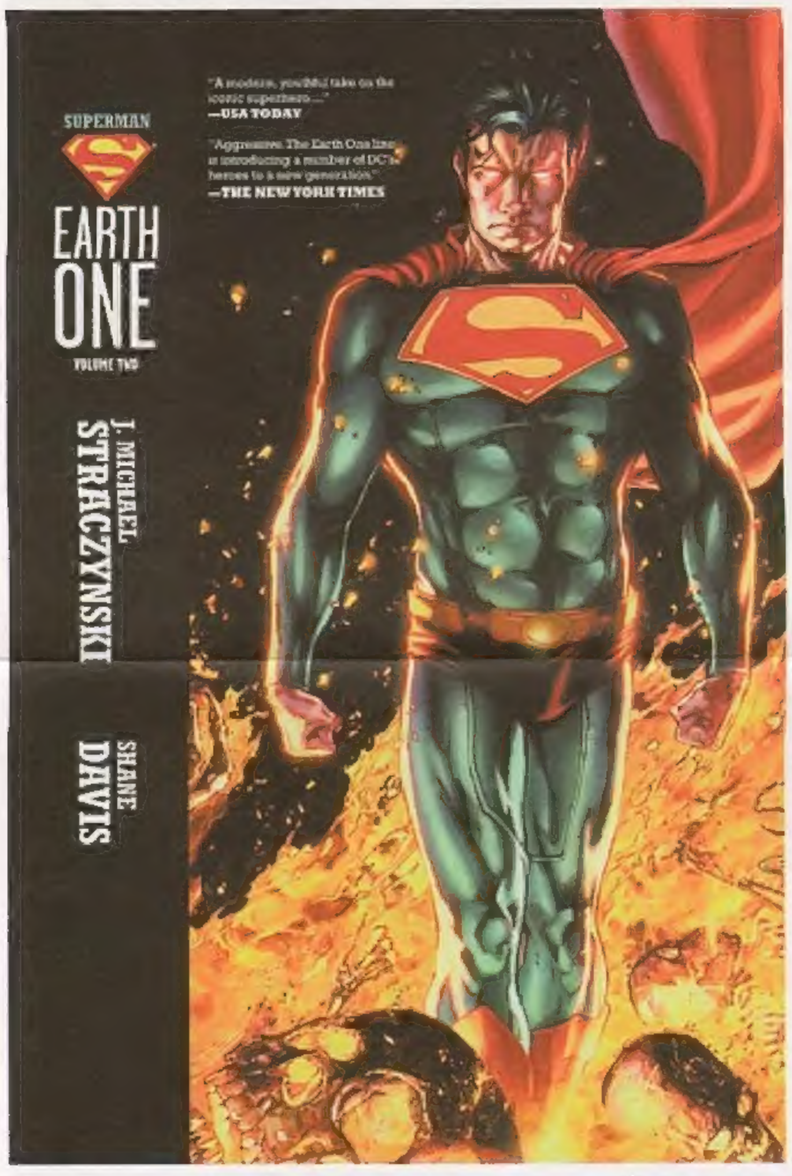
Reviews by Cliff Biggers

Superman: Earth One Volume 2 HC

J.Michael Straczynski (W); Shane Davis (A)

(JUN120225 DC Comics $22.99)

Two years ago, *J. Michael Straczynski & Shane Davis* made DC history with their best-selling graphic novel ***Superman: Earth One.*** The book, which moved Superman's origins to modern times and presented a story of a young Superman finding his place in a contemporary world, was refreshing in the way it streamlined the amazingly complex Superman mythos, trimming the supporting cast, reinterpreting those who remained (including the best take on Jimmy Olsen that readers have seen in many years), and establishing the need for a Superman in a modern world without superheroes.


SUPERMAN
"A modern, youthful take on the iconic superhero..."
—USA TODAY
"Aggressive. The Earth One line is introducing a number of DC's heroes to a new generation."
—THE NEW YORK TIMES
EARTH ONE
VOLUME TWO
J. MICHAEL STRACZYNSKI
SHANE DAVIS

A year later saw the debut of the streamlined, revamped, modern New 52 DC Universe, and it seemed that ***Superman: Earth One*** might be redundant. After all, didn't the New 52 also reset Superman continuity, moving his origin into the recent past while streamlining and reinterpreting his character base?

Superman: Earth One Volume Two proves that there's still a place for these standalone original graphic novels. Straczynski & Davis are telling stories set in a world in which Superman is the *only* superman. There's no Justice League here, no Team 7 investigating the sudden outgrowth of superhero activity; Superman is unique, just as he was in the earliest days of the Golden Age. He operates in a world that still isn't sure of his purpose, his powers, or his relationship with humanity.

While the original ***Superman Earth One*** explored Clark Kent's newly-adopted role as a superhero, ***Superman Earth One Volume Two*** focuses much more on Clark Kent as he tries to find his place as a human being. Straczynski introduces a new romantic interest for Clark, Lisa Lasalle (Yes, the LL's remain an essential part of the Superman mythos). In some ways, she is a sort of Mary Jane to Clark's Peter Parker: she's flirtatious, self-confident, assertive, and gorgeous, and the combination of those qualities overwhelms Clark. She's a fresh face who can poke fun at some of the elements of Superman's background (he's really from *Smallville?)*, but there's more to her than that—a complexity that takes both Clark and the reader by surprise.

Superman also learns that having super-powers doesn't mean that you can solve the world's problems; in a modern world, issues like national sovereignty, borders, and governmental authority can complicate even the most noble hero's desire to do good.

Superman: Earth One Volume 2 also introduces a new adversary for Superman, a Parasite who can absorb energy—including the powers of a Superman. His confrontation with this Parasite forces him to become even more in tune with his human side as he learns for a while what life without powers is like. And he also learns that action have ramifications.

There are troubling aspects of this story as well; this Superman is less restrained than the Man of Steel we've gotten to know in the comics, more willing to use his powers in ways that make it clear that Superman's ethos is different in this world.

This volume also introduces two major protagonists who will presumably plague Superman in ***Superman: Earth One Volume 3***—but I won't ruin the surprise by identifying them here.

Superman: Earth One Volume 2 proves that there *is* a place for ***Earth One*** tales in a comics market dominated by DC's fresh New 52 DCU. The ***Earth One*** tales allow writers to stray further afield from the core Superman mythos, introduce bolder changes, and explore complexities of Superman's role in a way that a writer can't do in the New 52—because no one can ever forget that in that world, Superman is one hero among many, just the first of a virtual pantheon of heroes. Superman as the lone hero offers a different set of creative opportunities, and it appears that Straczynski intends to explore them in future volumes.

Walking Dead #s 97-102

Robert Kirkman (W); Charlie Adlard & Cliff Rathburn (A)

(Image Comics $2.99@/$3.99 #100)

Occasionally I cross paths with people who don't read ***Walking Dead*** because they "don't like zombie stories." I let them know that I don't like zombie stories, either—but I never miss an issue of ***Walking Dead.*** I point out to them that ***Walking Dead*** is as much a zombie story as ***Incredible Hulk*** is a chronicle of radiation exposure.

Walking Dead #s 97-102 comprise the six-part "Something to Fear"—and is usually the case, the "something" in this case isn't the walking dead, it's the walking *living*. ***Walking Dead's*** has always emphasized the tenacity of the living... and the horrors the living inflict on one another. As always, the human-against-human savagery is more disturbing than any zombie assault.

The storyline pits Rick and his band of survivors against the brutal Saviors and their leader, Negan. It's a confrontation that results in deaths on both sides—including #100's callously horrifying beating death of one of Rick's friends—and leads to a surprising change in the group dynamic in ***Walking Dead #102.*** By the end of this issue, it's clear that Rick has matured through the loss and suffering of the past 101 issues; he is a more pragmatic man than he was in the beginning, and that pragmatism leads him to a decision that would have been unheard of earlier in this series. But is that decision legitimate, or is it in itself a ruse?...

Since it's ***Walking Dead,*** there are zombies in here—but their role in this story arc is almost superfluous. They function as an intervening obstacle in the story, but not as the focus. That's no surprise, of course, because as I said before, ***Walking Dead*** is *not* a zombie comic.

Walking Dead remains one of the most compelling—and sometimes disturbing—comics being published... Anyone who dismisses it as "just a zombie comic" is doing the book and themselves a disservice.

Amazing Spider-Man Omnibus Volume 2 HC

Stan Lee (W); John Romita with Don Heck, Larry Lieber, & others (A)

(NOV110598 Marvel $99.99)

I have been an enthusiast of classic comic reprints ever since DC's ***Superman Annual #1*** back in 1960. The opportunity to read quality reprints of hard-to-find material was always irresistible to me; my appreciation of reprints continued through DC's ***80-Page Giant*** run, Marvel's reprint titles (***Marvel Tales, Marvel Collector's Items Classics,*** and ***Fantasy Masterpieces***), the ***100-Page Super Spectaculars*** of the 1970s, the wonderfully large ***Treasury Editions***... it was hard to find a reprint format I *didn't* enjoy (even those mass-market reprints of early Marvel material found a home in my collection).

As you can imagine, I was thrilled when the reprint format truly got the respect it was due with the release of ***Marvel Masterworks*** and ***DC Archives.*** High-quality, well-made hardcover editions, carefully restored and often supplemented with text pieces and background information... what wasn't to love?

And yet, I found myself still hoping for something better.

Thankfully, that "something better" came along in the form of Marvel's Omnibus Editions and DC's Absolutes. Each took a different approach: while Absolutes showed off the art in a 35% larger oversized format

OWWW! MY ANKLE!
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and often included bonus pages (sketchbook pages, scripts, etc.) the Marvel Omnibus volumes made the *reading* experience more complete by adding those wonderful Marvel letters columns, where readers like me could discover and entire world of fan contacts who were just as enthused about comics as I was. And that addition is what makes the Marvel Omnibus hardcovers a more complete and satisfying reading experience.

the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
39 AUG
ANOTHER MARVEL FIRST
SPIDEY and The GREEN GOBLIN... BOTH UNMASKED!

Amazing Spider-Man Omnibus Volume 2 is a wonderful addition to any library; it offers about 2 1/2 years worth of Spidey comics by ***Stan Lee & John Romita***, who was tapped for the book when *Steve Ditko* left. Romita kicks off his run with the unforgettable two-part Green Goblin story from ***Amazing Spider-Man #s 39 & 40;*** the book continues through ***Amazing Spider-Man #67,*** adding the original material from a trio of ***Amazing Spider-Man Annuals*** as well as both issues of the all-too-short-lived ***Spectacular Spider-Man Magazine***.

As much as I love the Ditko run on Spidey, I must admit that the stories in these issues are stronger than the last few months of the Lee-Ditko run; it's obvious that Stan was re-energized by Romita's arrival on the book, and his enthusiasm shows through in these classic issues from Marvel's glory days.

The 15% larger trim size of the Omnibus hardcovers shows off the art even better than do the Masterworks, and the books are designed to be accessible and readable even in this large page count; the binding is designed to stay flat for ease of reading. The paper is bright but not excessively so, and the coloring seems to be designed with the paper in mind--not overly garish, not excessively bright.

Could the Omnibus editions be even better? Of course: Marvel could add all the house ads and other features that helped to define the nascent Marvel Age of Comics in the mid-1960s. And if they wanted to truly be the ultimate reprint experience, they could follow the course set by another publisher...

ACG Collected Works: Forbidden Worlds Volume 1 HC

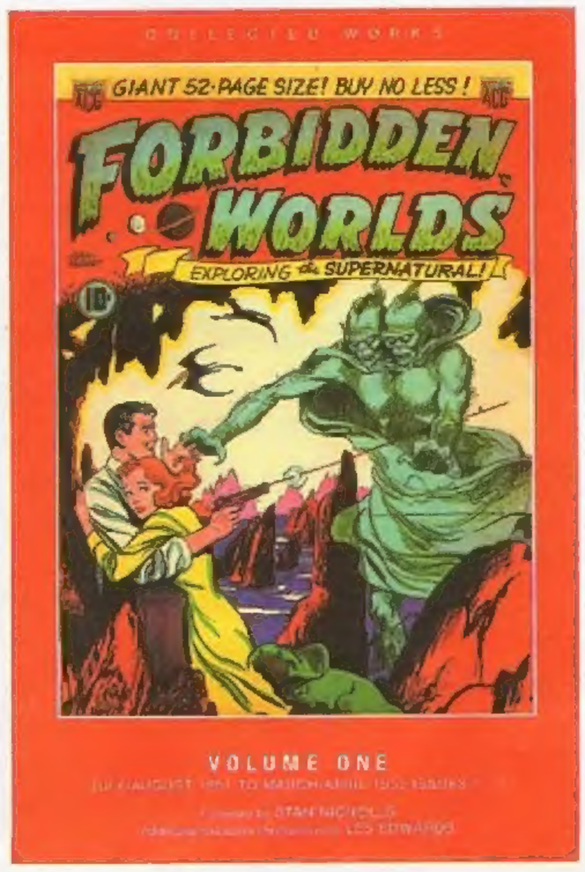
Various (W/A)

(JUN121241 PS Artbooks $47.99)

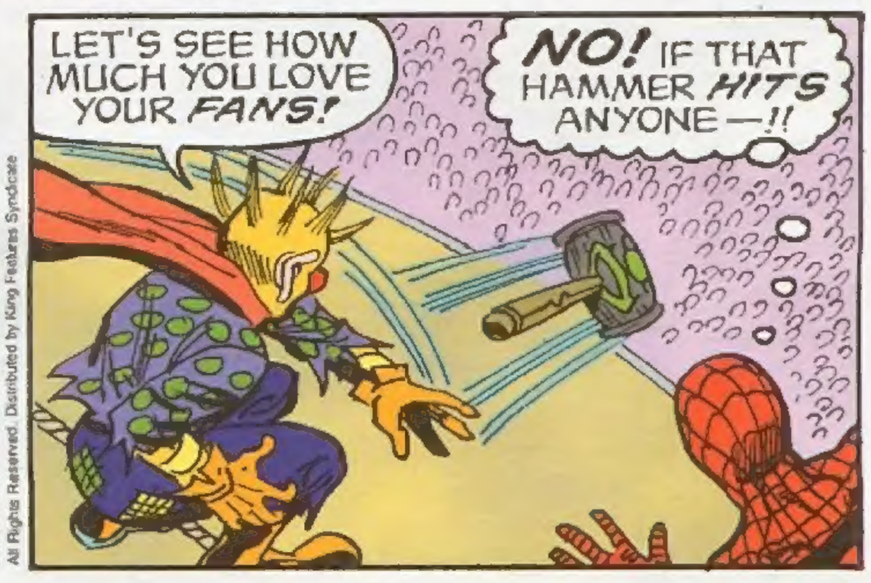
The folks at PS Artbooks have figured out the ideal approach for reprinting hard-to-find classic comics: they're reprinting *everything* in their hardcover. Every ad (both house ads and third-party paid advertising), every text page—the *entire comic*, reprinted from front to back. This is the ideal contents approach for a reprint; it not only allows the reader to enjoy all the comics material, but it recreates the look and feel of the actual comic, anchored in the time period to which it belongs by period-specific advertising. *This* is the format that both Marvel and DC should pursue, since it comes as close as possible to presenting bound copies of the original comics.

Forbidden Worlds Volume 1 HC reprints the first five 52-page issues of the horror series from American Comics Group as originally published in 1951 and 1952. While most readers who know of ACG comics remember only the latter years of the company's publications, featuring frequent work by *Paul Reinman, Pete Costanza, Kurt Schaffenberger, Ogden Whitney, Chic Stone,* and others, these early issues include occasional stories by such greats as *Frank Frazetta, Al Williamson, Roy G. Krenkel, & Wally Wood,* who were making comics history at approximately the same time over at EC Comics. While the stories in ***Forbidden Worlds*** are far more crude than the horror-suspense material published by EC, they have a period-piece charm.

Now that I've mentioned the most noteworthy asset of these PS Artbook Editions, I should acknowledge the one drawback: these books are scanned from printed copies of the original comics with basic restoration to balance colors, etc. As a result, they lack the sharpness and visual appeal of Marvel and DC's reprint volumes. Dot-screen color patterns often display a slightly mottled blotchiness; linework is marred by occasional dropouts; out-of-register color in the orignal is reprinted exactly as originally printed; black areas sometimes have.a spotty greyish quality. That said, it's worth noting that improving scanning technology makes these scanned-from-reprinted-copies hardcovers more visually impressive with each passing year (and even the big guys have to resort to a scan from a printed copy from time to time, as can be seen in ***Amazing Spider-Man Omnibus Volume 2's*** reprint of the black-and-white half-toned ***Spectacular Spider-Man #1***).



Now if only Marvel and/or DC would include cover-to-cover content in their reprints, I suspect they'd learn that a large number of collectors (like me) would be willing to purchase this material one more time!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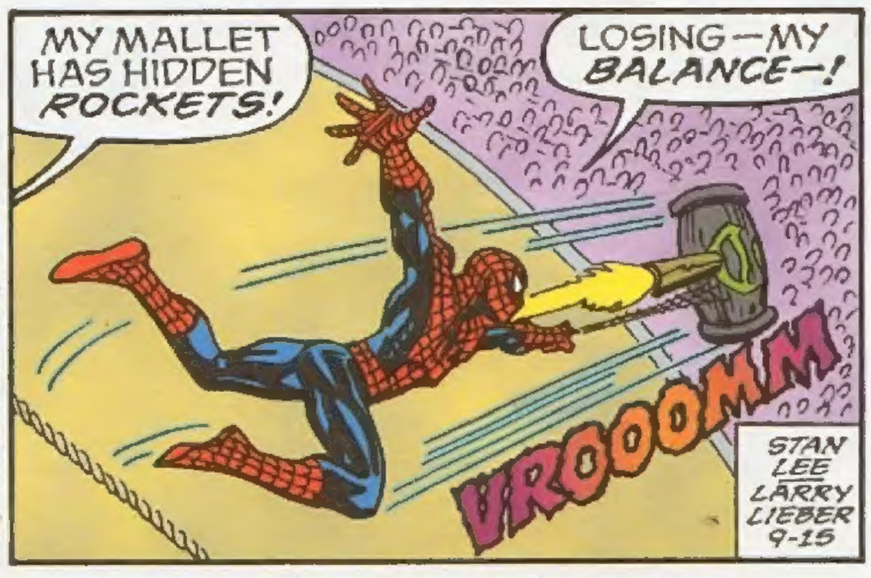
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